

WORLD AGRICULTURAL WEATHER HIGHLIGHTS

January 12, 2004



1 - UNITED STATES

Storms repeatedly battered the Northeast during the first 3 weeks of December, resulting in frequent bouts of heavy rain, snow, and high winds. Winter wheat areas in the lower Midwest retained plenty of moisture from previous heavy rainfall, while Southern winter grains received enough rain to promote generally normal development. Farther west, the Plains' winter wheat situation remained far from ideal due to limited subsoil moisture. Occasional snowfall provided a boost in topsoil moisture on the northern and central Plains, but exceptional dryness persisted on the southern High Plains, where high winds on December 15 triggered a major dust storm. Farther west, late-month storminess improved snow packs across the Intermountain region, where reservoir storage remained well below normal due to a multi-year drought. Below-normal monthly temperatures were confined to the East, where an early- to mid-December cold snap helped to condition Florida's citrus trees. At month's end, however, some of the coldest air in several years overspread the Southwest, where some winter crop producers had to take freeze protection measures.

2 - SOUTH AMERICA

In Argentina, moisture conditions improved for emerging to vegetative summer crops in December. However, timely rainfall and seasonable temperatures will be needed during the remainder of the growing season to ensure current yield potential of late-planted crops, especially in Cordoba. In Brazil, widespread showers and seasonable warmth maintained mostly favorable growing conditions for soybeans, corn, coffee, and citrus.

3 - EUROPE

Across northern and eastern Europe, seasonably cold weather and near-normal precipitation in December provided favorable overwintering conditions for dormant winter grains and oilseeds. In southwestern and southern Europe, near- to slightly below-normal rainfall maintained adequate topsoil moisture for semi-dormant to vegetative winter grains. Locally heavy rain in south-central France in early December caused some flooding.

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*(More details are available in the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin.
Subscription information may be obtained by calling (202) 720-7917.)*

4 - FSU-WESTERN

In December, above-normal temperatures provided mostly favorable overwintering conditions for dormant winter grains in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltics. Although major winter wheat producing areas in Ukraine and southern Russia remained snow free during the month, temperatures did not fall low enough to threaten crops. Since early January, colder weather was accompanied by widespread snow in many areas, providing a protective snow cover for winter grains.

5 - NORTHWESTERN AFRICA

Across Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, widespread above-normal December rainfall continued to provide adequate to abundant topsoil moisture for winter grain planting and germination. In portions of northern Tunisia, however, rainfall was excessive, possibly necessitating some replanting.

6 - MIDDLE EAST AND TURKEY

Across central Turkey and western Iran, seasonably cold weather caused winter grains to remain dormant, while near- to above-normal December precipitation increased moisture supplies for next spring's growth. In the eastern Mediterranean, generally above-normal rainfall favored winter crops.

7 - SOUTH ASIA

In December, a late-season tropical cyclone brought heavy showers to eastern India, causing some damage to winter rice. Above-normal showers along with cool temperatures favored winter wheat in northern India.

8 - EASTERN ASIA

In central and southern China, unseasonably mild weather maintained favorable overwintering conditions for wheat and rapeseed, while scattered showers boosted moisture reserves for winter crops in the Yangtze Valley. Freezing temperatures stayed north of major sugarcane areas along the southern coast. Unseasonable wetness persisted over Japan.

9 - SOUTHEAST ASIA

In December, showers increased throughout Indonesia, boosting moisture supplies for rice and corn. Above-normal rainfall boosted moisture supplies for oil palm in peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra. Heavy showers caused flooding in the southern Philippines.

10 - AUSTRALIA

In December, below-normal rainfall in Western Australia spurred rapid winter wheat harvesting and maintained good grain quality. In contrast, frequent rain in eastern Victoria and southern New South Wales hampered winter grain harvesting, while drier weather throughout the remainder of southern Australia helped fieldwork. Showers in eastern Australia improved local moisture supplies for summer crops, but more rain is needed to end prolonged drought and maintain yield prospects.

11 - SOUTH AFRICA

Drier- and warmer-than-normal weather continued over most major corn producing areas, limiting moisture reserves for emerging crops and possibly impeding late planting. Timely rain will be needed in upcoming weeks to prevent declines in yield potential.